

BrassTacks

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Paul Trotman, Jonathan Milne and Nathan Surrell, Nogent-Sur-Marne Bible College, Paris

Serving those who serve...



Storage container, Malawi

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Editorial

**“Now this is what the Lord Almighty says:
Give careful thought to your ways.” Haggai 1:5**



As the time comes for me to retire as a Trustee, I thought I would look back over the last 21 years of my involvement with Brass Tacks. Within the first year I had a taste of the practical work done by volunteers on one of many visits to France. I realised that not only was there a need to plan and prepare for each project undertaken, but this had to be followed up by the dedication of the volunteers who worked so hard to carry these plans out - the Lord had put in place the right people with the skills needed to do His work.

I have also had the privilege of working in Tanzania, Zambia, Albania, and Spain (as

well as nearer home in England and Wales) learning something of the culture and problems faced by Christians in different countries and seeing that the work of Brass Tacks has been used by the Lord to encourage Christians in many parts of the world.

Haggai challenged the people: “give careful thoughts to your ways”. The people had built their panelled houses but had neglected to “build” for the Lord, a danger so many of us face today in such a busy world. Can I encourage you to consider helping on a Brass Tacks trip – help is always welcome, whether you have a skill or are just willing to lend a pair of hands where needed.

As I have seen the gratitude of people, who have very little, when provided with what we would call essential, and the way God has answered prayer I feel very humble and blessed to have been part of Brass Tacks.

Editor’s note: We are very grateful for the help given to Brass Tacks over the years both in the board meetings as well as in his many project visits. We have shared some great times together and we are very glad that he has come out unscathed!

Editorial by Paul Trotman

Blantyre, Malawi, Bethel Bible School

David Wood



David Wood making shuttering for container

According to Google maps from our home in Motherwell to Blantyre is 5.2 miles and should take approximately 13 minutes. Recently however my trip from Motherwell to Blantyre took over 20 hours flying time and covered a distance of more than 600 miles. The second journey was of course to Blantyre Malawi, not Blantyre Scotland. Philip Kennedy and I travelled together,

and we joined Alan Park who had been there for a week to get logistics in place for our arrival.

We were happy to eventually arrive and be met by Alan, Ananda and Jack at the airport and be whisked off to lunch with the remainder of the family mother Grace and their daughter Annie.

The Pulla family have been in Malawi for 12 years, commended by two assemblies in Andhra Pradesh region in the south of India. During our visit we were able to have fellowship with two of the assemblies they minister amongst and had the opportunity to share the Gospel in what is possibly the materially poorest assembly I have ever visited. However, the welcome and love we received was a real blessing to us.

Ananda and Grace work tirelessly with the local assemblies, travelling long distances teaching the Scriptures and preaching the Gospel. They are also involved in prison work and the distribution of the Challenge Newspaper throughout Malawi.



Completing the floor slab for first building.



Ananda, Grace and Annie with the team.

There is always a great need for literature for the prison work in particular.

Up until the Covid pandemic, they had regular prayer meetings with the firemen in Blantyre, but this has been stopped temporarily.

Our remit for the trip was to lay the concrete floor for a new building on the empty mission land. The purchase of a cement mixer enabled that work to be completed in good time and the team were also able to build a foundation to sit the new shipping container on and to lay foundations for the start of some boundary walls.

We were well taken care of by Grace and enjoyed lots of varied Indian food and were constantly urged on by Grace to

“HAVE ANOTHER CHAPATI, BROTHER”. Since our return we are encouraged to see that Ananda has been able to employ some other local masons to complete more boundary foundation and walls. They have also started to build on the concrete floor and have completed external walls and ring beam.

We would commend Ananda and Grace along with their two children Jack and Annie to your prayers. There are numerous challenges they face which are common to many missionaries, and their children's education would be one such issue. The vision is for at least two other buildings on the compound to be built and for a Bible training centre to be established to enable the Malawian believers to be adequately prepared for further Christian ministry.

Great fulfillment. Introducing Nathan Surrell



Nathan Surrell at Stockport project (Renewal North West)

I am 32 years old and have been in the building industry as a joiner since leaving school at 16. Alongside that I picked up other skills and knowledge by working with other trades and renovating my house.

I became interested in Brass Tacks by reading the magazine as several copies were usually available at the back of my church, and it always seemed like something I could do to use the natural skills and experience God has blessed me with over the years. If it meant by doing these projects that it would free up time for fellow Christians and assist in spreading the good news of God's salvation and teaching His word and witnessing in their communities - then

that would be a much better use of my time and energy than just making money for myself or another random company.

I first applied to Brass Tacks in 2017 and the first two projects I did in 2018 were in Stockport, working on the Renewal Northwest mill project and the offices of the Postal Bible school in Cootehill in Republic of Ireland. I had met the people behind these ministries personally before applying to Brass Tacks, so I knew the work they did, and it felt like God was calling me to help out.

The mill project in Stockport involved a lot of rip out and demolition which I really enjoy as a change from construction and it's just a good honest hard day's work which had us looking like chimney sweeps by the end of it. We also did a lot of first fix studwork walls and ceilings and plaster boarding work which was very familiar as I do most of my normal work in the timber framing industry.



Some of the team at Stockport after a hard day.

getting to renew old friendships, meet and have fellowship in practical matters with other Christians is my favourite part of being part of a project.

The Postal Bible school project was at the opposite end of the scale as it involved modifying and fitting some second-hand library shelving units; that was a test of my bench joinery skills which I don't get very often.

After the Covid pandemic I got another chance to help out for a couple of days doing some more demolition / dismantling work at the Echoes International offices in Bath in May 2022. Then in summer this year in France at the Nogent Bible School in Paris I was doing some shuttering and concrete work to form a wheelchair access ramp between two buildings. God willing, if He continues to give me health, strength and opportunity, I hope I can help out on many more projects in the years to come.

Working on a Brass Tacks team is a breath of fresh air when used to working on building sites: the language and conversation is poles apart but the banter and the love of a good cup of tea and a bacon roll is universal. The work ethic and motivation however is unlike anything I'm used to in my everyday work, and getting to renew old friendships, meet and have fellowship in practical matters with other Christians is my favourite part of being part of a

project. Just knowing that in some small way we have been able to serve our God, who did the greatest thing for us by sending his Son to die for us and give him the glory – that's what it's all about.



Nathan and Garry Maxwell fitting a kitchen

Angola: Building for the future.

Paul Dodds



Paul's little friends.

Each time we work there or pass through en route to other projects. I have found it a great encouragement to see the young people develop and grow in their faith.

In June this year Brass Tacks returned to the familiar place of Camundambala in Angola where Brian and Debbie Howden and Johnathan and Ruth Singleton have been working for many years. Each time we work there or pass through en route to other projects. I have found it a great encouragement to see the young people develop and grow in their faith. Their reading skills have improved because of the new school, which BT helped with

back in 2017; this has helped them as they look into the Bible and their understanding of what God has planned for them has grown.

This is indeed evident as they are taking more leading roles in the church. It is great to be able to join them in their services. Sitting in the building we often wondered if it would be our last visit to this building as the roof looks as if it

would fall in any time! I startled folk there as on my way out during a service I opened the door and it fell off its rotten hinges and frame. So, our task was to erect a new building.

**...their understanding
of what God has
planned for them
has grown.**

The new build was to be done using a steel frame. The local workers who would help us had experience of this type of construction as we had used this on a new school building which is nearby. The steel frame arrived in containers and so the task began. Phil Kennedy had passed through a year back and helped put in the twelve base pads in concrete. Phil, Dave, and I along with Jonathan and Brian



Philip Kennedy, Jonathan Singleton, Paul Dodds and David Wood.



More little spies.

...we look forward to seeing it completed and in its future being used to enable the Christians meet there to worship

worked with around a dozen local men, many of whom are members of the church. First, the frame was erected onto the foundation pads. Next came the roof sheets. A lot of supervision was needed in lifting due to the height and weight of the steel and we only had the use of a forklift. Thankfully everything went well.

We also had time to cast in concrete a half landing staircase to the second floor. We finished all our tasks on this major first stage of the building and we look forward to seeing it completed and in its future being used to enable the Christians meet there to worship and help people in their spiritual growth. To see this new strong building was certainly a great encouragement to the folk there.



The steel frame well on to completion.

To see this new
strong building was
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Nogent-Sur-Marne Bible School, Paris

Alan Park



The Bible School in the suburbs of Paris has been a facility greatly used for training Bible students from various countries in the Francophone speaking world. Many young people have moved from there to serve the Lord in various parts of France and beyond. The assemblies in France have greatly benefitted from students who have passed their study time there.



At present there are renovations in progress in the oldest building. These have been complicated by the discovery of wood rot in the structure, so the affected areas have to be treated one small part at a time by removing the damaged wood and replacing it with reinforced concrete.

Brass Tacks were involved in pouring a ramp for access from the carpark. This was done during a spell of particularly hot weather, so the concrete dried out rather rapidly. With the remaining time we helped by removing the kitchen and shower and floor tiles in preparation for renovation of one of the staff apartments.

We were greatly helped by Jonathan Milne, Nathan Surrell and Paul Trotman who did justice to the excellent French cuisine. Since we left the team at Nogent have continued with the wall on the left of the picture.

We may return at a later date when the roof has been replaced and the work of fitting out the dormitories begins.



Update on Blantyre, Malawi (Bethel Bible School)

Alan Park



First building ready for the roof.

Since the Brass Tacks team left at the end of August, Ananda and family have been hard at work with the local bricklayers. They have brought great encouragement to us to see how much has been achieved in such a short time.

The builders were building a house at the plot opposite the site and we stopped for a chat. It turns out that the owner of the new house was himself a contractor, and so Ananda engaged him with his team of builders to continue the project.

The plan is to use the first building for a mini-Bible School, which will enable some to come from further afield and study the word of God together. Accommodation will be a squeeze, however that is a good incentive to go ahead and add further buildings as the Lord supplies.



Building the boundary wall.

Update on Lusaka Bible Centre, Zambia

Alan Park



Accommodation at the Lusaka Bible Centre.

Paul Dodds went back to Lusaka to help with the ongoing building work at the centre compound. Willard, one of the lads who we worked with previously is still working there and he has been a great help for Paul and at the same time is adding to his skills as a builder.

At the time of writing David Wood and Philip Kennedy have just arrived out to join Paul. This is the very hot time of year, so we are praying that they will be sustained as they work in the heat and try to do as much as possible while they are there.

Giving

2023 to date

Individuals	£19,057
Assemblies/churches	£7,753.61
Trusts	£39,750
Other	£53,250 (church closures)
Total	£119,810.61



Leaving a legacy

You might like to consider remembering the ministry of Brass Tacks in your will to enable this very worthwhile ministry to continue to be a blessing to others in many countries worldwide.

Next projects

- **Coventry Gospel Hall extension.**
- **Nogent Bible School, Paris.**
- **Bethel Bible Centre, Malawi.**

There are several other projects in UK and elsewhere which are currently under consideration.

Pray

- for wisdom in planning!
- for those who have requested projects but as yet do not have funds in place.
- for more team leaders to work with the present team and local workmen, and for more volunteers.



Access ramp, before 12m³ of concrete.



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